

with the Author sincere
respects. 16.

A
S E R M O N
O N T H E
S A B B A T H.

[Price Six-Pence.]



[Price Six Pence.]

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ON THE
S A B B A T H : 16

OCCASIONED BY
HIS MAJESTY'S PROCLAMATION,
FOR A DUE OBSERVANCE OF
THE LORD'S DAY.

ADDRESSED TO
PARENTS AND HEADS OF FAMILIES.

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S E R M O N

ON THE

S A B A T H :

PREPARED BY

THE MAJESTY'S



THE LONDON

ADDRESSED TO

PARENTS AND YOUTH OF PARISHES

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EXODUS XX. 8.

REMEMBER THE SABBATH-
DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY.

IT is the observation of an eminent writer * of this country, that if keeping holy the seventh day were only a human institution, it would be the best method that could have been thought of for the polishing and civilizing of mankind ; it is certain, (says he) that many people would soon degenerate into a kind of savages and barbarians, were there not such

* Addison's Spectator, No. 112.

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frequent

frequent returns of a stated time to meet together to hear their duties explained, and join in an adoration of the Supreme Being, for his mercies and benefits bestowed upon them.

If we peruse the 19th chapter of *Exodus*, we shall see with what a dreadful solemnity the *Ten Commandments* were delivered by God to *Moses* from Mount *Sinai*; ver. 16. This was a sight so terrible, that *Moses* himself said, (Heb. xii. 21.) *I exceedingly fear and quake*: And for the people, they, when they saw the fire, the blackness, darkness, and the tempest, and heard the thunder, trumpet, and the voice of God, *removed and stood afar off, and said to Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.* The words which God spake, with this amazing dreadful preparation, were the *Ten Commandments*. Do you think these words were words to be neglected

neglected or forgotten?—The words of the text are part of that divine law that God himself uttered, with all those awful circumstances. And if there is any precept among this chosen number that is more essential to religion and virtue, and more necessary for the good of man than any other, it is this: *Remember the Sabbath-Day to keep it holy.*

I will not presume to specify what exercises, visits, or occupations, except those prohibited by law, are inconsistent with the decent, godly, and reasonable observation of the Lord's-Day: or how great a portion of it every Christian is bound to consecrate to acts of piety, and employ in the public or private duties of *religion*; and the obligations it lays upon us, whoever takes a view of the world, will, I fear, be able to discern but very faint marks of this character either upon the looks or actions of its inhabitants; for,

without running into any violent declamation against the wickedness of the age, we may say, within the bounds of truth, that there is as small a share of religion, (at least as little of the appearance of it) as can be supposed to exist at all in a country where it is countenanced by the state. The degeneracy of the times has been the complaint of many ages: How much we exceed our forefathers in this, is known alone to that God who trieth the hearts.—But this we may be allowed to urge in their favour:—they studied at least to preserve the appearance of virtue.—Public vice was branded with public infamy, and obliged to hide its head in privacy and retirement. The service of God was regularly attended, and religion not exposed to the reproach of the scorner.

How the case stands with us at present in each of these particulars, it is grievous

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to report, and, perhaps, unacceptable to Religion herself; but let us for a moment impartially consider the articles of this charge.

If religion is any where to be found, one would think it would be amongst those of the higher rank in life, whose education and opportunities of knowing its great importance, should have brought them over to its interests, and rendered them as firm in the defence of it, as eminent in its example.—But if you examine the fact, you will almost find it a test of a politer education, and mark of more shining parts, to know nothing, and indeed care nothing, at all about it: or, if the subject happens to engage the attention of a few of the more sprightly wits, that it serves no other purpose but that of being made merry at, and of being reserved as a standing jest to enliven dis-

course, when conversation sickens upon their hands*.

If we take a view of the public worship of Almighty God, and observe in what manner it is revered by persons in this rank of life, whose duty it is to

* A remarkable instance of this is well attested: A servant, who had made the improvement that might be expected from hearing the irreligious and blasphemous conversation continually passing at the table where it was his place to wait, took an opportunity to rob his master: being apprehended, and urged to give a reason for his behaviour—“Sir,” said he, “I had heard you so often talk of the impossibility of a future state, and that, after death, there was no reward for virtue, nor punishment for vice, that I was tempted to commit the robbery.”—“Well,” replied the master, “but had you no fear of that death which the laws of your country inflict upon the crime?”—“Sir,” rejoined the servant, looking sternly at his master, “What is that to you, if I had a mind to venture that? you have removed my greatest terror; why should I fear the less?”

[The table was that of Mr. Mallet. The fact is related by DAVIES, in his Life of GARRICK, vol. iii. p. 59.]

set an example to the poor and ignorant, we shall find concurring evidence upon this melancholy argument—of a general want of all outward demonstration of a sense of our duty towards God, as if religion was utterly below the consideration of a person of figure and consequence.

What must the lower kind of people think, when they see the nobility and gentry turn the Sabbath into a time of amusement and recreation, whirling about from one pleasure to another, totally regardless of the respect and honour which is due to the day*, what must be the opinions which servants must form, of the

* This most indecent practice of travelling upon a Sunday is now become a common custom: It must grieve every one who wishes well to religion, to see people of the highest rank and influence proving to the vulgar, that they think it a matter of the most abject indifference, by prophaning those sacred hours which are set apart for public worship. If this is not a public contempt of the Almighty, surely nothing can be called so.

importance of religious observances, as means to solemnize the minds of men when they too often see their masters and mistresses pay no regard to them whatsoever; and not only this, but even worse, when they see them trodden under foot, and even laughed at.

I cannot help here observing, that of all our national sins, that of prophaning the Lord's-Day, even in a political view, is one of the most dangerous.—What security can we have for the honesty of tradesmen—for the fidelity of servants—for the obedience of children, or, in short, for the observance and performance of those civil and relative duties, which are essential to the peace, comfort, and happiness of our common life, if men have all religious awe, all reverence of religious obligations and ordinances, eradicated from their minds, so that they are taught to live *without God in the world?* The
Great

Great, therefore, who hold religion cheap—
—who neglect its duties in public—who
indulge themselves in a course of life in-
consistent with its precepts, how wrong
do they act. They rob the laws of God
of a powerful sanction; they weaken the
designs of them: well may they complain
that the lower classes of people are out-
rageous; they teach them to be so:—well
may they find their inferiors difficult to
be governed; the Great themselves will
not submit:—well may they complain of
a contempt of authority; they themselves
despise the authority and laws of God*.—

This

* The learned Bp. BURNET, in his *Life of ROCHESTER*,
(which book, Dr. S. JOHNSON says, the critic ought to
read for its elegance, the philosopher for its arguments, and
the saint for its piety) says, the Earl told him plainly, there
was nothing that gave him, and many others, a more secret
encouragement in their ill ways, than that those who pre-
tended to believe, lived so that they could not be thought to
be in earnest when they said it: and that the behaviour of

the

This is certainly setting a bad example to the lower ranks of mankind; and we are not to imagine, but that the contempt

the clergy made him often think, they suspected the things were not true, which, in their sermons and discourses, they so earnestly recommended.—And it must be acknowledged, that a minister, who is not of a sober and unblemished life, can do but little good in his station. His prayers and discourses will have but little weight and authority: his people will not fail, in the midst of his best performances, to call to mind the irregularities of his conduct, and to reproach him severely for them, with “Why do you exhort us to live godly and sober lives, by arguments which have no effect at all on yourself?” This shews the necessity of the minister going before his flock in the ways of righteousness; that he should, by his example, prove that the rules he lay down are practicable; and that the ways of religion are, in general, much more easy and pleasant than men are apt to imagine: this is the reason, why vice appears so particularly odious and detestable in those, who are ministers of the word of God—why their offences give a deeper wound to religion than the crimes of other men:—this it is that take off all the weight from their reproofs and exhortations, and make some suspect the truth of the very principles of religion, when it has so little influence on themselves.

that

that religion is held in by those whose examples they are too apt to imitate, will, in time, utterly shake their principles, and render them if not as prophane, at least as corrupt as their betters. — When this event happens, and we begin to feel the effects of it in our dealings with them, those who have done the mischief, will find the necessity at last of turning religious in their own defence, and, for want of a better principle, to set an example of piety and good morals for their own interest and convenience.

The streams of religion run deeper or shallower, as the banks of the Sabbath are kept up or neglected; and one would think as but one day in seven is set apart both by divine and human laws, for the special and solemn service of Almighty God, who has been pleased to declare, *that those who honour him, he will honour,* surely the least expression of our gratitude

is

is a strict observance of his positive command, *to keep holy the Sabbath-Day*, that through the continuance of his protection and blessing, *it may be well with us, and with our children for ever*. The enforcing of obedience to this precept, is intrusted to the peculiar care of God's representatives, the earthly magistrates, *who beareth not*, (or ought not to bear) *the sword in vain*; but as *reformation*, not *punishment*, is the principal and most desirable object, it is earnestly to be wished, that all offenders were well acquainted with the penalties to which they become liable by the laws of their country, and that those laws were put in execution against some of the most notorious delinquents, that if better motives cannot influence them, they may at least be kept in awe by those*.

And

* *On such as prophane the LORD'S DAY.*—

By doing or executing any business or work of their ordinary callings on the Lord's-Day, or any part thereof, (works
of

And when we consider human life as a state of probation, or as it were a seminary for future happiness and perfection, how

of necessity and charity only excepted.)—Penalty. *By the 29th Car. II. c. 7. persons convicted hereof, by view of a Justice of the Peace, confession of the party, or witness, are to pay 5s. or to be put in the stocks two hours: Licensed houses besides forfeit their licences.*

By public crying, or exposing any wares, merchandize, &c.—Penalty. *By the same act it is the forfeiture of all the goods so exposed to sale.*

By idling or wandering in time of divine service.—Penalty. *By the same act 5s. or stocks two hours.*

By not resorting to their parish-church or chapel (or to some congregation of religious worship, allowed by the toleration act) on every Sunday, nor having reasonable excuse.

—Penalty. *Offenders incur the punishment of the censures of the church, and forfeit 1s. to the poor for every offence.*
1 Eliz. c. 2.

By resorting to a concourse of people out of their own parishes for any sports or pastimes; or for any unlawful exercises and pastimes used by any persons within their own parishes.—Penalty. *Forfeiture for every offence, 3s. 4d. to the poor, or the party to be set publicly in the stocks for three hours.* 1 Car. c. 1.

Ale-house

how kind an institution is the appointment of the Sabbath, as a day of rest and recollection from the care of secular affairs, while the divine spirit and harmony of public worship gradually forms in the soul those heavenly dispositions, which are the best qualifications for the presence of God, and the society of saints and angels.

The great Sir MATTHEW HALE, who made it his custom, for many years, every Lord's-Day in the afternoon, to employ his thoughts upon several subjects of divine contemplations, and to put them into writing, has the following remarks, in his directions to his children for keeping

Ale-house keepers, vintners, inn-keepers, permitting tippling in their houses. —Penalty. *By the 1st Jam. I. c. 9. if convicted of such permission, are to pay 10s. and persons tipling there, 3s. 4d. but if convicted of drunkenness, disabled to keep an ale-house for three years. 21 Jam. I. c. 7.*

Carriers, &c. travelling on Sunday. —Penalty. *By the 3d Car. I. c. 1. forfeit 20s.*

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the Lord's-Day :—That he by long and found experience, found, that the due observance of this day, and of the duties of it, had been of singular comfort and advantage to him, and ever had joined to it a blessing upon the rest of his time ; and that the week so began, was blessed and prosperous to him ; and on the other hand, that when he had been negligent of such duties, the rest of the week had been unsuccessful and unhappy to his own secular employments : and that he could easily make an estimate of the success in his affairs the week following, by the manner of his passing the Sabbath-Day ; and that he did not write this lightly or inconsiderately, but upon a long and found experience : he then concludes his directions with the following exhortation :—

Perform all this chearfully, uprightly, and honestly, and count it not a burthen to you ; for, assure yourselves, you shall find

find a blessing in so doing; and remember, it is a friend that tells you so, and that loves you, and will not deceive you; and (which is more than that) remember, that the eternal God hath promised— (Isaiah 58.—13, 14.) *If thou turn thy foot from the Sabbath, &c.*

If we turn our eyes to the Sabbath-breaker amongst the youthful or inferior part of mankind, the scene is more melancholy still; this institution of the Lord's-Day, though intended even chiefly for their advantage, is most dangerous; in this it but resembles many other means of grace, which, being misapplied, become pernicious; some rich men, (it has been observed) had been happier, if they had been born to labour; and the poor, sometimes, find reason to wish they had had no day at their own disposal; brought to the most deplorable end, and become examples and spectacles for the good only
of

of others, they have been heard to acknowledge, with their dying breath, that their first engagements in iniquity, were contracted at a time when they were, too much, alas! for them, their own masters on the Lord's-Day: they were corrupted and undone by the abuse of God's mercy, and the very means which he had appointed for their amendment and salvation.—The truth of this observation is evident from facts: Which of us cannot recollect instances within the circle of our own acquaintance of young persons who have been deluded, corrupted, ruined, by the association with idle and licentious companions on the Lord's-Day? Perhaps some of us have seen those who were dear to their friends in early life, on account of their piety and religion, who have been unexpectedly caught in this destructive snare: Perhaps we have seen their native innocence changed into li-

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centious-

centiousness—their piety into profaneness. How many distressed parents may be found who are weeping over a disobedient and irreligious child, and, with grief, ascribing his ruin to a breach of the Sabbath : there was a time when his amiable disposition was the joy of their hearts, and when they had looked forward with a pleasing hope to the season when he should be the comfort of their advanced age—the constancy and pleasure with which he then attended upon religious institutions—from his duty there—the readiness with which he performed every office of filial duty—the care and diligence with which he treasured up useful stores of knowledge : but he enters the world unsuspecting, and mingles, before he is aware, with young persons of irreligious manners, and, without being apprehensive of danger, follows wherever they lead him : by degrees, the pious instructions

structions of his friends and parents are forgotten; the good impressions of his religious instructions are effaced, and he sinks into a course and state of insensibility: his parents observe and lament his degeneracy with unavailing, and, perhaps, despised tears, that their unwearied labour is lost, and pleasing hopes blasted, and they go down with sorrow to the grave.—Such are the fatal effects which too frequently proceed from Sabbath-breaking.—Look abroad into the world, observe some whose circumstances are so embarrassed, that they know not what course to take; others who are obliged to submit to the confinement of a prison as a punishment for their irregularities; and others chained in dungeons just ready to receive from the hand of justice the desert of their crimes:—Ask all these what was the first step towards their present unhappy state, it is probable that

most of them will tell you—a breach of the Sabbath.

To conclude, with a word to parents and heads of families :—You that are parents and masters, if you desire your own good, and a blessing upon your families and undertakings, let what has been said be improved by you. A good man (like Joshua) will not only endeavour to *serve the Lord* himself, but will do all in his power that others may serve him and glorify him too, and especially those who are of his own family. Thus; it is mentioned in the word of God, greatly to Abraham's honour, that he would use his best endeavours to promote religion in his house. *I know him, saith God, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.* And it is recorded of Cornelius, and mentioned as an excellent instance of his piety, *That he feared God*
with

with all his house, and prayed to God alway. Masters and heads of families have certainly a trust committed to them from God, with respect to the souls of those under their care. If he be *worse than an Infidel*, who *careth* not, and provideth not, for the bodies of his children and servants, what must he be—worse than a brute, sure—who does not care and provide, in the best manner he can, for their souls!—We may suppose the great Judge of all questioning with such persons at the great day, as once he did with *Cain*, —*Where is Abel thy brother?*—Where are thy sons and thy daughters, and thy servants, whom I did, by my providence, commit to thy care and charge? What care hast thou taken of their precious souls? Didst thou teach them, and command them to keep the way of the Lord? Didst thou pray in thy house; and hast thou done what thou couldest to save the
souls

souls of all that dwelt under thy roof?—
These are serious questions, which greatly
concern all parents and heads of families
to consider how they will answer them
at the great day of the Lord.

From what has been said, I do not
mean to enforce a superstitious regard of
the Sabbath, but to recommend a per-
formance of such holy exercises as are
warranted from scripture, and enforced
by our religion. A proper observance of
this day will afford us an opportunity of
praising God for all his mercies of crea-
tion, providence, and grace; of increasing
our knowledge of divine things, and con-
forming ourselves to the heavenly pattern
of all perfection Jesus Christ our Lord;
of instructing our children and families
in the good ways of the Lord, and train-
ing them up in his fear: and above all,
a particular and necessary part of our duty
on this day is to attend the ordinances of
God's

God's house.—We receive many public blessings, how ought we to render him public acknowledgments, especially when we are such glorious gainers thereby.—For he that honoureth God by a public profession of his name, God will eventually honour with his presence and protection here, and with his glory hereafter.

And God grant that we may all employ in a right manner the few Sabbaths and the few days which we have to come on earth, that we may ever esteem it a privilege and a happiness to have a day set apart for his service; may we call it a delight, and truly make it so, that we may enter at the last into that rest that remaineth for the people of God in Heaven.

T H E E N D.

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T H E E N D